



Missouri Nursery Pest News

Office of the State Entomologist
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Timely information for Missouri's green industry!

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Recent Observations: Tent Caterpillars Hatching in SE Missouri

Tent caterpillars observed on crabapples in Cape Girardeau County on March 24, 2003. The tents were reported to be very small and apparent the egg hatch was 3-4 days earlier.

There are several species of tent caterpillars in the U.S., which belong to the family Lasiocampidae. In Missouri, the Eastern and Forest tent caterpillars are commonly observed. The Eastern seems to be the more prominent species. These pests are found in untreated orchards, fence rows, and various other shade and ornamental trees.

Eggs hatch in early spring about the time wild cherry begins to develop leaves. The overwintering eggs are in brown shiny masses which encircle the twigs. Soon after they hatch, small larvae move out to the leaves and begin to feed. Larvae collect in a crotch of the tree where they build a silken tent for protection. As the larvae increase in size they range farther out on the host devouring the leaves as they go. As they travel they spin silken threads behind them. During overcast or rainy weather the larvae return to their tents.

Eastern tent caterpillars are black hairy with a yellowish-white strip down their back. Forest tent caterpillars differ in having a row of keyhole-shaped spots down their back.

Fruit trees and other small ornamental trees can be defoliated by tent caterpillars.

Numerous insecticides may be used to control the small larvae such as carbaryl, chlorpyrifos, diazinon, or permethrin.

Non-chemical: petroleum oils, insecticidal soaps, *Bacillus thuringiensis*, or physical removal of webs.

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For more information:

See University Extension Guide Sheet: *Insect Defoliators of Missouri Trees: Web Producers*

Agricultural publication G07271

<http://muextension.missouri.edu/explore/agguides/pests/g07271.htm>

Remember: Before using any chemical, always read the label carefully for directions on application procedures, appropriate rates, first aid, storage, and disposal. Make sure chemical is properly registered for use on the intended pest. Any products named are not intended as endorsements, nor is criticism implied of similar products that are not mentioned.